

Date: 21 January 2010  
Contact: Rebecca Cook - 0438 316 435

## Fast food advertising proves self-regulation is a charade



A major fast food outlet is making a mockery of self-regulation, flouting a recent ruling by the Advertising Standards Board (ASB) and continuing to broadcast ads for an unsuitable children's meal, according to a coalition of peak health bodies.

Hungry Jack's is broadcasting a new ad for its Kids Club Meal of three chicken nuggets and water – the same meal that was deemed by the Advertising Standards Board to contravene nutritional standards\* that the company helped to develop. Instead of developing an appropriate meal for children, the fast food giant has simply created a new ad with four Simpsons collectable toys, leaving the meal as is.

Jane Martin, senior policy adviser for the Obesity Policy Coalition called on the Australian Government to end the charade of advertising self-regulation and impose an effective regulatory system with appropriate sanctions.

"Fast food advertisers are laughing in the face of the self-regulatory regime and the ASB. They are not taking concerns about childhood obesity seriously. They have developed these so called self-regulatory initiatives to appear socially responsible, but they are not even complying with their own rules.

"This illustrates how ineffective self-regulation is; the slap on the wrist by the ASB has done nothing to deter this sort of advertising from rolling out. It's time for the Government to acknowledge that fast food advertisers cannot be trusted to do the right thing when it comes to our children's health. In this case commercial interests and children's interests are not compatible," said Ms Martin.

Since the ASB ruled the chicken nugget meal inappropriate to advertise to children in November 2009, the new ad promoting the same meal deal with a free Simpsons toy has run more than 300 times on major commercial TV stations across Australia.

### Background information

On 1st August last year, several fast food industry restaurants implemented a code of conduct for advertising and marketing to children - the Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children (the Initiative). (See <http://www.aana.com.au/QuickServiceRestaurantInitiative.htm>.)

Under the Initiative, the restaurants agree not to promote food or beverages that do not meet nutrition criteria in advertisements directed primarily to children under 14. They also agreed not to feature licensed characters or 'premiums' (free toy offers) in food advertisements, unless the nutrition criteria are met.

Media release



Hungry Jack's has developed an action plan relating to compliance with the QSR Initiative, under which it agrees to comply with the nutrition criteria in advertising to children. (See <http://www.aana.com.au/documents/HungryJacksQSRInitiativeActionPlan.pdf>.)

The Australian Association of National Advertisers oversees the Initiative, and the Advertising Standards Board determines complaints.

On 9 December 2009, the Advertising Standards Board upheld a complaint by the Obesity Policy Coalition about a Hungry Jack's commercial promoting a 'Kids Club Meal' that contained three chicken nuggets, a water and a promotional Sponge Bob Square Pants toy. The complaint was upheld on the grounds that the meal failed to meet the nutrition criteria, and the advertisement featured licensed Sponge Bob Square Pants characters. (See the Advertising Standards Board's decision at [http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/casestudy\\_c.asp](http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/casestudy_c.asp).)

The Advertising Standards Board requested Hungry Jack's remove the offending advertisement.

Since the Advertising Standards Board's ruling, Hungry Jack's has broadcast a new advertisement for the Kids Club Meal, this time promoting a free Simpsons couch toy (a plastic model of the Simpsons family sitting on a couch) that comes with the meal. The advertisement has been broadcast at least 304 times on commercial television stations since 29 December 2009 while children have been on school holidays, and has been shown during young children's programs, such as Toasted TV.

Hungry Jack's has not changed the nutritional content of the Kids Club Meal since the Advertising Standards Board's ruling.

#### **\* Nutrition criteria for assessing children's meals**

For a meal to meet the Initiative's nutrition criteria, it must not exceed maximum limits of saturated fat (0.4g per 100kJ), sugar (1.8g per 100kJ) or sodium (650mg per serve). (See <http://www.aana.com.au/documents/NutritionCriteriaforAssessingChildrensMeals.pdf>.)

The meal featured in the most recent Hungry Jack's advertisement again comprises three chicken nuggets and a Mt Franklin spring water. According to the Hungry Jack's website, 3 chicken nuggets contain 3.2g of saturated fat and 571kJ. This equates to 0.56g of saturated fat per 100kJ. Therefore, the meal exceeds the maximum limit of saturated fat, and does not comply with the nutritional criteria.

Three chicken nuggets and a bottle of water is clearly not a healthy children's meal. Chicken nuggets only contain 51% chicken. The meal does not include any fruit or vegetables and is high in saturated fat.



# Media release



The advertisement is contrary to Hungry Jack's own company action plan, which states that Hungry Jack's will ensure that any products or meal combinations specifically directed to children under 14 will meet the Initiative's nutritional guidelines.

### **Licensed characters**

The new advertisement again features licensed characters that appears to be a breach of clause 4.2 of the Initiative.

Clause 4.2 of the Initiative states that popular personalities or licensed characters are not to be used in advertising directed primarily to children under 14, unless the food product advertised complies with the nutritional criteria.

The advertisement shows all the members of The Simpsons family sitting on the plastic couch toy.

The Obesity Policy Coalition plans to submit another complaint about the latest Hungry Jack's advertisement to the Advertising Standards Board.

### **About the Obesity Policy Coalition**

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies who are concerned about the escalating levels of overweight and obesity, particularly in children.

The Obesity Policy Coalition partners include Diabetes Australia Victoria, The Cancer Council Victoria, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the World Health Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University.



# Media release

